

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 ACDA-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 EB-08 TRSE-00 DHA-02 MC-02 /086 W
-----151848Z 040206 /40

R 150900Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9887

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BELGRADE 1549

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ET, FT, YO, SO

SUBJECT: GOY OFFICIAL ON ETHIOPIA AND ATNAFU ABATE VISIT

REF: BELGRADE 1361 (NOTAL) AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY: GOY STILL CONSIDERS CONDITIONS IN ETHIOPIA
"EXTREMELY DANGEROUS". WHILE PURPORTEDLY CONVINCED
MENGISTU, ATNAFU ET AL ARE ETHIOPIA'S "TRUE REVOLUTIONARIES",
GOY "EXPECTS MORE EXECUTIONS" AND ADMITS TO AT LEAST SOME
DOUBT OF PRESENT REGIME'S ABILITY TO STABILIZE INTERNAL
SITUATION. GOY AND EPMG "FUNDAMENTALLY DISAGREE" ON
RESOLUTION OF ERITREAN PROBLEM AND GOY "NOT AT ALL"
CONFIDENT OF ADDIS' ABILITY TO HOLD ERITREA BY FORCE SHOULD
IT PERSIST IN ITS EFFORTS TO DO SO. YUGOSLAVS CLAIM TO
HAVE AGAIN COUNSELED GRANTING OF "FULL AUTONOMY" TO ERITREA
WITHIN AN ETHIOPIAN "FEDERATION". FSFA OFFICIAL NOTED
HIS GOVERNMENT'S ON-GOING "MILITARY COOPERATION" WITH
ETHIOPIA, SOMALIA AND THE SUDAN BUT STOPPED SHORT OF
ADMITTING ARMS TRANSFERS COMPRISE PART OF "COOPERATION"
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WITH ANY OF THESE COUNTRIES. SAME OFFICIAL DEEMED "A
QUESTION FOR THE FUTURE" WHETHER APPARENTLY INCREASING
SOVIET INFLUENCE IN ETHIOPIA MIGHT EVENTUALLY JEOPARDIZE
THAT NATION'S "NON-ALIGNED" STATUS. GOY OPPOSED "IN
PRINCIPLE" TO EVEN SHORT TERM POST-INDEPENDENCE FRENCH MILITARY
PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI. IN REALITY, HOWEVER, YUGOSLAVS APPEAR MORE
CONCERNED WITH POSSIBILITY OF PERMANENT FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE

THERE. END SUMMARY.

2. MENGISTU-ATNAFU REGIME AND SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA.
FSFA OFFICE FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA COUNS DUSAN EGIC TOLD
EMBOFF MARCH 10 GOY BELIEVES "TRUE", THOUGH FORMERLY
BEHIND THE SCENES LEADERS OF ETHIOPIAN "REVOLUTION"
ARE THOSE NOW VISIBLY IN CONTROL (IF NOT OF THEIR
COUNTRY, AT LEAST OF THE "REVOLUTION".) EGIC COMMENTED
THAT YUGOSLAV AMB TO ADDIS, WHO RETURNED TO BELGRADE
FRO ATNAFU VISIT AND IS STILL HERE, HAS BEEN OUTSPOKENLY
SUPPORTIVE WITHIN GOY OF MENGISTU, ATNAFU AND
BACKERS AS INDIVIDUALS, IN TERMS OF THEIR "REVOLUTIONARY"
AND "SOCIALIST" COMMITMENT. DESPITE SUPPORT GOY
BELIEVES MENGISTU-ATNAFU FORCES ENJOY, IT REALIZES, EGIC
SAID, THAT EVEN THEY HAVE ENEMIES WITHIN ETHIOPIA AND
THEIR SECURITY IS NOT ABSOLLUTE. IF MENGISTU-ATNAFU
GROUP WERE ITSELF OUSTED AT SOME FUTURE POINT, HE
NOTED, "REVOLUTION" WOULD BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE.
(COMMENT: FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT WHETHER MENGISTU-
ATNAFU FORCES ARE VANGUARD RATHER THAN LAST RESORT OF
THE "REVOLUTION" IS OBVIOUSLY A QUESTION OF DEFINITION.)

3. DISAGREEMENT ON ERITREA. EGIC CITED ERITREA AS "THE
ONE ISSUE" ON WHICH GOY AND EPMG "FUNDAMENTALLY DISAGREE".
"ZARKOVIC AND MINIC TOLD (ATNAFU ABATE) OPENLY AND
FRANKLY THAT THE ERITREAN PROBLEM MUST BE SOLVED" AND
THAT SOLLUTION COULD COME ONLY THROUGH GRANT OF "FULL
AUTONOMY" TO ERITREANS, ALBEIT WITHIN AN ETHIOPIAN
"FEDERATION". IN SO DOING, YUGOSLAV LEADERS DESCRIBED TO
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ETHIOPIANS THE ORGANIZATION OF YUGOSLAV FEDERATION AND
FUNCTIONING OF YUGOSLAVIA'S CONSTITUENT REPUBLICS.
CONTINUING, EGIC SAID GOY BELIEVES DOMINANT ERITREAN
FACTIONS WOULD FAVORABLY RESPOND TO OFFER BY ADDIS OF
SUCH "FULL AUTONOMY" AND NOT PRESS DEMANDS FOR INDEPENDENCE.
HE CLAIMED ETHIOPIANS HAVE PROMISED TO CONSIDER YUGOSLAVS'
COUNSEL BUT REFERRED TO RECENT "EXECUTION" OF ADDIS'
"NEGOTIATOR ON ERITREA" (PURPORTEDLY NOT AMONG THOSE
KILLED WITH TEFERI BANTE) AS EXEMPLARY OF MORE
RUDIMENTARY PROBLEMS CURRENTLY PLAGUING NEGOTIATIONS.
YUGOSLAVS ARE "NOT AT ALL" CONFIDENT OF ADDIS' ABILITY
TO HOLD ERITREA BY FORCE SHOULD IT PERSIST IN EFFORTS
TO DO SO, EGIC STATED.

4. ATNAFU ABATE'S REPORTED "ARMS SHOPPING" IN
YUGOSLAVIA. EMBOFF RAISED CLAIMS IN (WESTERN) PRESS
COVERAGE OF ATNAFU VISIT THAT HE WAS HERE PRIMARILY
SEEKING ARMS FROM YUGOSLAVS AND FACT THAT YUGOSLAV
PRESS HAD ITSELF GIVEN UNUSUAL PUBLICITY TO ETHIOPIAN

DEL'S VISIT TO NIKINCI "ARMS EXHIBIT" (PARA 8, REFTEL).
EGIC REMARKED THAT SUDANESE IN PARTICULAR HAD EXPRESSED
GREAT INTEREST AND CONCERN OVER POSSIBILITY OF GOY
ARMS TRANSFERS TO ADDIS. HE SAID GOY HAD TOLD SUDANESE
THAT IN VIEW OF YUGOSLAVIA'S "FRIENDLY" RELATIONS WITH
THE SUDAN, ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA IT "COULD NOT" SELL ARMS
TO ONE AND NOT THE OTHERS (CLAIM BY IMPLICATION BEING
THAT THE YUGOSLAVS SELLING NO ARMS TO ANY OF THESE
COUNTRIES). EGIC CONFIRMED, HOWEVER, THAT GOY ENGAGES
IN "MILITARY COOPERATION" WITH EACH OF THESE COUNTRIES,
SELLING THEM "KITCHEN UTENSILS, COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT
AND OTHER THINGS" BUT, AS FAR AS HE KNEW, NO ARMS.
(COMMENT: VIEWED AGAINST EMBOFF'S LAST TALK WITH EGIC,
IN WHICH LATTER REFUSED EVEN ACKNOWLEDGE EXISTENCE OF
MILITARY LINKS, HIS STATEMENT ON "MILITARY COOPERATION"
APPEARS MARGINALLY IF UNIMPRESSIVELY NEARER THE TRUTH.)

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SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 EB-08 TRSE-00 DHA-02 MC-02 /086 W
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5. GROWING SOVIET INFLUENCE IN ETHIOPIA. EMBOFF ASKED
HOW EGIC ASSESSED RUMORED GROWTH IN SOVIET INFLUENCE IN
ETHIOPIA AND WHETHER GOY WAS AT ALL CONCERNED ETHIOPIA'S
"NONALIGNED" STATUS MIGHT EVENTUALLY BE JEOPARDIZED.
AFTER SOME FUMBLING, EGIC REFERRED "FOR EXAMPLE", TO
SOMALIA AS A COUNTRY KNOWN TO HAVE SUBSTANTIAL TIES
WITH THE SOVIET UNION BUT ONE WHICH HAD NONETHELESS
MANAGED TO MAINTAIN ITS NONALIGNED STATUS(*). "IN
PRINCIPLE", HE SAID, GOY OPPOSES ANY SOVIET ATTEMPT TO
INCREASE ITS INFLUENCE IN ETHIOPIA. ASKED SPECIFICALLY

WHETHER GOY WOULD FIND ACCEPTABLE A LEVEL OF SOVIET INFLUENCE IN ETHIOPIA COMPARABLE TO THAT HE HAD JUST ACKNOWLEDGED IT ENJOYS IN SOMALIA, EGIC SAID, "THAT IS A QUESTION FOR THE FUTURE" AND REPEATED GOY'S AFOREMENTIONED "PRINCIPLED" OPPOSITION TO SUCH INFLUENCE.

6. DJIBOUTI'S FUTURE. EMBOFF ASKED HOW GOY ASSESSES POSSIBILITY OF OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA ATTENDANT ON DJIBOUTI'S TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE LATER THIS YEAR. EGIC RESPONDED ONLY THAT
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POSSIBILITY OF ARMED CONFLICT WOULD DEPEND LARGELY ON SOVIET UNION, UNITED STATES AND "OF COURSE" FRANCE. HE THEN INQUIRED POINTEDLY WHETHER FRANCE INTENDS TO MAINTAIN A PERMANENT MILITARY PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI OR SEEKS MERELY A TEMPORARY POST-INDEPENDENCE MILITARY PRESENCE TO HELP INSURE AT LEAST SHORT TERM STABILITY IN THE AREA. EMPHASIZING HE EXPRESSING ONLY PERSONAL COMMENT, EMBOFF SAID HE UNAWARE OF ANY FRENCH PLANS FOR PERMANENT MILITARY PRESENCE IN AN INDEPENDENT DJIBOUTI.

7. COMMENT: EGIC'S CLAIM OF GOY-EPMG DISAGREEMENT ON ERITREA MAY EXPLAIN WHAT SEEMED TO US OBLIQUE AND CONTRADICTORY REFERENCE TO THIS SUBJECT BY ATNAFU ABATE IN FORMAL TOAST DURING HIS VISIT HERE. LATTER HAD SAID EPMG "RECOGNIZES THE RIGHT OF ALL NATIONALITIES (IN ETHIOPIA)...TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND TO FULL AUTONOMOUS RIGHTS...., (BUT THAT) ALL NATIONALITIES IN OUR COUNTRY WILL BE TREATED EQUALLY".

8. FOR THE PRESENT WE STAND BY COMMENT IN REFTTEL, PARA 9, REGARDING ALLEGED IMPORTANCE OF "ARMS SHOPPING" ASPECT OF ATNAFU ABATE VISIT AND TEND TO VIEW RELATIVE PUBLICITY ACCORDED TOUR OF NIKINCI FACILITY AS MORE A PR PLOY (FOR REASONS SPECULATED ON IN REFTTEL) THAN EVIDENCE OF SIGNIFICANT MOVEMENT BY YUGOSLAVS IN ARMS SUPPLY AREA.

9. EMBASSY NOTED WITH INTEREST ARTICLE ENTITLED "COUP AGAINST ETHIOPIA'S COUP-MAKERS?" IN MAR 2 ISSUE OF "ECONOMIST'S" "FOREIGN REPORT". ARTICLE ARGUED ATNAFU POSES POTENTIAL CHALLENGE TO MENGISTU AND "REAL PURPOSE" OF VISIT BY FORMER TO YUGOSLAVIA WAS "TO SEE WHETHER HE COULD WIN THE SUPPORT OF MARSHAL TITO". LEAVING ANALYSIS OF WHO MAY YET TOPPLE WHOM AND HOW TO THOSE MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE, WE WOULD NONETHELESS STATE WE HAVE SEEN NOTHING WHICH SUPPORTS "ECONOMIST'S" APPARENT CLAIM
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THAT ATNAFU WAS HERE SEEKING YUGOSLAVS' SUPPORT FOR
HIMSELF VIS-A-VIS MENGISTU.
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Message Attributes

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